

## **BALANCING PUBLIC SAFETY AND PROTECTION OF HISTORIC PLACES**

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For over half a century, the General Services Administration (GSA) has been the government's leading provider of real estate services. The Public Buildings Service of GSA owns close to 2,000 buildings and leases another 6,000 buildings. Approximately 500 of these buildings are considered historic (that is, listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places), while about 30 of them are National Historic Landmarks. Physical protection of Federal employees and the public has always been a priority for GSA, long before the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building bombing and the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. While security and safety always have been key factors in facility designing, planning, and management, these issues have taken on greater significance since 9/11/01.

Historic buildings should meet the same security criteria as other buildings. Security upgrades in historic buildings require ingenuity and imagination. It is inherently unsuited to rigid sets of rules, since each building is unique. It is also recognized that total compliance with security criteria may not be possible in every case. In historic buildings, to minimize loss of historic fabric, security design criteria is based on building specific risks assessment and strategic planning. Strategic programming includes focusing security modifications on vulnerability points and locating less vulnerable activities in the historic buildings.

GSA is committed to excellence in design and development of its sites and buildings. For GSA, this means an integrated approach that achieves the highest quality of aesthetics in meeting the requirements of the building's users and accomplishing the mission of the Federal client agencies, while at the same time delivering a building that is a lasting architectural legacy that will serve the American people for many decades. Public architecture should be an expression of our American values. It should be dignified as well as welcoming and accessible. The goal is to develop strategies that integrate security technology, design, and training with excellence in architecture and landscape design. We cannot see security and architecture as a tradeoff, with an advance in one meaning a compromise in the other. Security measures are necessary, but should be implemented in response to warranted rather than unwarranted fear. We must remain an open society, we cannot become a "bunker" or "fortress" society.

Starting at the earliest phase and continuing throughout the design process, GSA and design professionals work together to balance security and architecture based on accurate data rather than on prescriptive, one-size-fits all solutions. Overall, the goal of both GSA and our clients is to provide necessary physical security while maintaining standards of architectural excellence that convey both openness and dignity. Security should be designed to meet reasonable rather

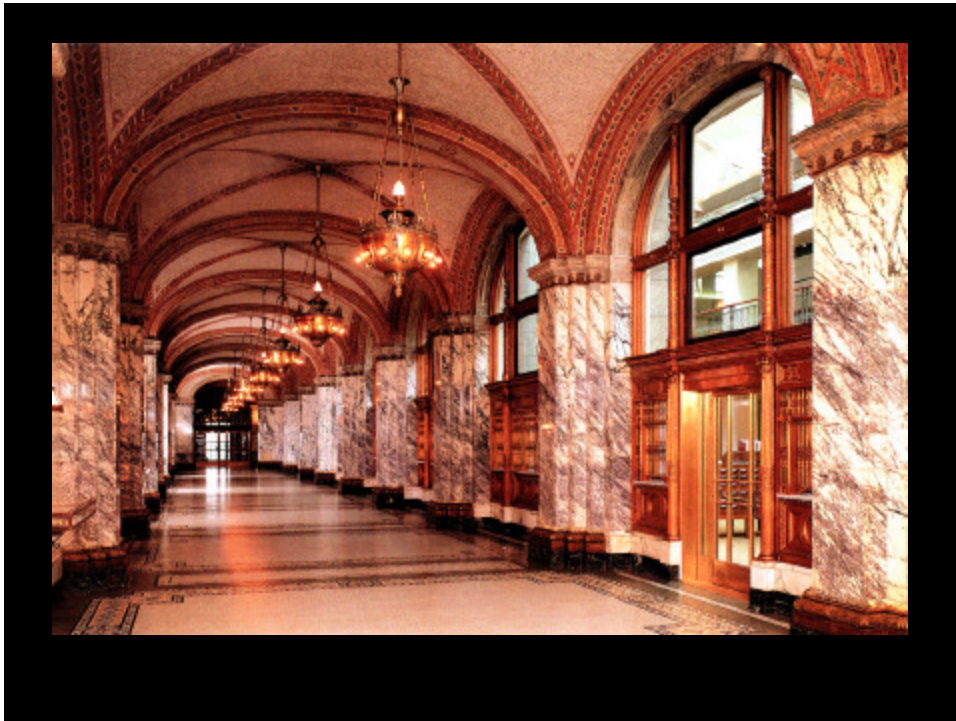
than rare catastrophic threats. Teamwork with respect to security-related decisions is a must. No one group within an organization should focus solely on security measures. We need to have a system of checks and balances in order to most effectively design, construct and operate a real estate asset.

Immediately after the bombing of the Alfred B. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, GSA joined other agencies to identify ways to better protect Federal workers and the general public. The Department of Justice's *Vulnerability Assessment of Federal Facilities*, outlines new Federal standards for improved security according to building risk level. GSA also took the lead to create the Interagency Security Committee's (ISC) *Security Design Criteria*, which establishes the criteria for building setbacks, hardening of building walls and structural reinforcement to secure windows and prevent progressive collapse. However, there is a major concern that if sensitive information about buildings and the Security Design Criteria is not restricted it could fall into the hands of terrorist or other criminal elements. Counterbalancing legitimate security concerns, it is GSA's policy to give these information to those who have a *need to know*, such as design professionals, and state and local agencies.

GSA's commitment to historic properties contributes not only to the performance of our finest public buildings, but serves to enhance the locales in which they are situated. We have two wonderful examples in San Francisco. The Court of Appeals Buildings and Customs House were severely damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake and were seismically upgraded and restored in the 1990's. Both buildings are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The buildings have an elaborate granite exteriors and interiors of marble, decorative plaster and hardwoods. With completion of the installation of 256 Friction Pendulum™ bearings in June 1994, the Court of Appeals Buildings became the largest building in the world to have been retrofitted with seismic isolators. The methods of security at the U.S. Court of Appeals and U.S. Customs House rely on having a well-trained staff, incorporating new technology as it becomes available, and making changes to the buildings only when necessary.



**U.S. Court of Appeals Building, San Francisco, CA.**



**U.S. Court of Appeals Building, San Francisco, CA**



**U.S. Customs House, San Francisco, CA**

There are two Pacific Rim Region historic buildings in the 2003 budget for design. One is the Federal Building at 50 United Nations Plaza, San Francisco, which is scheduled for seismic upgrade, blast resistance and security measures. The other one is the Federal Building, USPO

and Courthouse in Hilo, Hawaii. It is also scoped for seismic upgrade and security protection. We are excited and ready for the challenges ahead of us.

GSA is recognized as a leader in security planning and implementation. As responsible stewards of historic buildings, GSA has taken innovative approaches to uphold Federal, state and local preservation policies. The challenge to strive for a balance between security, architecture and openness is: a) To ensure that the American people would not be separated from their government and their buildings, and b) That the peoples' buildings would continue to be an integral part of their communities.